



SALMONELLOSIS

What Is Salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is a food-borne infection caused by *Salmonella* bacteria. It is one of the main causes of food-borne illness worldwide. These bacteria grow in the small intestine and invade the gut lining.

Symptoms & Duration: Typical symptoms include the sudden onset of cramps accompanied by diarrhea, nausea, fever, chills, headache and vomiting. Dehydration is possible in cases where diarrhea is severe. The illness can last from several days to several weeks. Most people are ill for 4-7 days and recover without treatment.

Incubation Period: Symptoms usually appear 6 to 72 hours after swallowing the bacteria, though 12-36 hours is the most common.

Recovery, Long Term Effects & Immunity: Some strains of *Salmonella* can cause more serious illness like typhoid fever. In a small number of cases, *Salmonella* infection is dangerous and can be life threatening to infants, children, the elderly or people with immune system disorders. Most infections do not require treatment. Some people may recover but become carriers of the bacteria. A small number of persons who become infected can go on to have some degree of joint pain, eye irritation or painful urination called “Reiter’s syndrome”. Antibiotic treatment does not appear to affect the development of this syndrome.

How Is Salmonellosis Spread?

Salmonella bacteria are commonly found in the intestine of livestock, poultry, cats, dogs, rats, turtles, exotic pets (i.e. iguanas) and other animals. It has also been found in egg and egg products and on unwashed fruits and vegetables. *Salmonella* infection usually occurs when people eat food contaminated with the bacteria. Salmonellosis can pass from person to person; the bacteria are passed in the stool (feces) and make their way to another person on unwashed hands, contaminated food or objects. The bacteria can then be swallowed by another person, making them ill. Any raw meats may carry *Salmonella*. If these foods are not properly cooked, the bacteria can survive to cause illness when these foods are eaten.

How Do You Prevent Salmonellosis Infection?

- **Thorough hand washing is the best prevention.** Make sure hands are properly washed after using the toilet, changing diapers, handling animals or before preparing foods.
- Clean and sanitize counter tops and utensils after contact with raw meats and poultry.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating.
- Cook meat, poultry and egg products thoroughly. Cook stuffing/ dressing separately.
- Drink only pasteurized milk. Never let children sample raw milk directly from the animal.
- Avoid using raw eggs as in homemade eggnogs and never use dirty or cracked eggs.
- Keep cold foods at 4°C or lower. Keep hot foods at 60°C or higher.
- Drink water from a safe supply. Have your well water tested to ensure it is safe to drink.
- If you have diarrhea, avoid preparing or handling food.
- Turtles, chicks, ducks, and exotic pets, such as iguanas, salamanders and hedgehogs, may carry *Salmonella*. These are not suitable pets for small children.

Adapted from Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors